

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-12

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 EUR-25 IO-14 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00

PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01

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FM USINT DAMASCUS

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INFO AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI

USINT ALGIERS

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT

AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY RABAT

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY SANAA

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

AMEMBASSY TUNIS

USMISSION GENEVA

USUN NEW YORK 020

C O N F I D E N T I A L DAMASCUS 0309

BEIRUT PASS BAGHDAD

KUWAIT PASS MUSCAT

GENEVA FOR MEPC DEL

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EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, SY

SUBJECT: SYRIAN DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER ON GOLAN

1. SUMMARY: IN MARCH 28 CALL DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER ISMAIL DESCRIBED THE SITUATION ON THE GOLAN AS TENSE, WHILE EMPHASIZING THAT SYRIA WILL NOT BE INTIMIDATED BY ISRAELI ACTIONS ON THE GOLAN, PARTICULARLY ATTEMPTS TO "DIG IN." DESCRIBING THE HISTORY OF THE SYRIAN/ISRAELI/ DIFFERENCES OVER THE GOLAN, HE INDICATED THAT ISRAELI TACTICS OF "ESTABLISHING FACTS" IN THAT AREA ARE UNACCEPTABLE TO THE SYRIANS WHO WILL NOT GIVE UP ONE INCH OF THAT AREA. EXPRESSING SYRIAN CONTINUED DESIRE FOR POLITICAL SETTLEMENT OF THE ARAB/ISRAELI PROBLEM, HE INDICATED THAT, NONETHELESS, SYRIA WOULD RESORT TO WAR AGAIN IF IT BECOMES NECESSARY.

2. DURING MARCH 28 CALL ON DR. ZAKARIA ISMAIL, DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER, TO DISCUSS OTHER MATTERS, (BEING REPORTED SEPARATELY), WE ALSO DISCUSSED THE CURRENT AREA SITUATION PARTICULARLY THE PROBLEM OF THE GOLAN DISENGAGEMENT. DR. ISMAIL DESCRIBED THE MILITARY SITUATION ON THE PLATEAU AS "TENSE" AND POINTED TO MARCH 27 SYRIAN NEWSPAPER ACCOUNTS DESCRIBING 17 HOURS OF CONTINUOUS SHOOTING. AS HE HAS SEVERAL TIMES IN THE PAST, ISMAIL EMPHASIZED THAT THE SYRIANS WILL NOT ACCEPT "THE ESTABLISHMENT OF FACTS" BY THE ISRAELIS ANYWHERE ON THE GOLAN BUT PARTICULARLY IN THE AREA CONQUERED IN THE OCTOBER WAR. THE SYRIANS WILL, THEREFORE, OPPOSE BY WHATEVER MEANS ARE AVAILABLE AND ISRAELI ATTEMPT TO "DIG IN" IN THE SASA SALIENT. HE STRESSED THAT THIS IS THE MAJOR REASON FOR THE GOLAN ARTILLERY EXCHANGES OVER THE LAST SEVERAL WEEKS. HE CONTINUED THAT AT THE SAME TIME, IN OTHER INSTANCES IT IS THE ISRAELIS WHO INITIATE THE FIRE AND, OF COURSE, THE SYRIANS WILL RESPOND IN KIND. WHEN I POINTED OUT THAT THERE ARE INDICATIONS THAT BOTH SIDES SEEM TO BE AT FAULT, HE REPLIED THAT

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THE UN OBSERVERS ARE ON THE SCENE AND ARE ABLE TO ASCERTAIN WHO INITIATES THE FIRING. I TOLD HIM THAT WE HAVE BEEN URGING BOTH SIDES TO CALM THE SITUATION, LEST THROUGH INADVERTENCE A SERIOUS ESCALATION MIGHT OCCUR.

3. ISMAIL STRESSED THAT THE SYRIANS ARE AWARE OF ISRAELI TACTICS WHICH ARE TO TAKE AS EXTREME A POSITION

AS POSSIBLE AND THEN GIVE A LITTLE AS THOUGH THEY ARE MAKING A MAJOR CONCESSION. THUS, THEY NOW TALK OF GIVING UP A BIT OF THE SASA SALIENT EXPECTING THAT THIS INSIGNIFICANT WITHDRAWAL WILL SATISFY THE SYRIANS WITH ITS MAGNANIMITY. ISMAIL INDICATED THAT THE SYRIANS WILL NOT BE TAKEN IN BY SUCH MANEUVERS, OTHERWISE THE OCTOBER WAR WOULD HAVE BEEN FOUGHT "FOR NOTHING." HE CONTINUED THAT THE ISRAELIS BELIEVE THAT HAVING ACHIEVED DISENGAGEMENT ON THE SINAI THEY CAN NOW CONCENTRATE ALL THEIR TROOPS ON THE GOLAN AND THEREBY INTIMIDATE THE SYRIANS TO GIVE UP THEIR JUST DEMANDS. ISMAIL INSISTED THAT THIS WOULD NEVER HAPPEN. THE SYRIAN GOVERNMENT IS PREPARED TO WORK FOR A POLITICAL SOLUTION OF THE ARAB-ISRAELI PROBLEM BUT IT IS ALSO PREPARED TO RESORT TO WAR AGAIN IF THIS BECOMES NECESSARY.

4. ISMAIL OBSERVED THAT MANY PEOPLE HAVE FORGOTTEN THE HISTORY OF THE GOLAN. WHILE ADMITTING THAT THE SYRIANS USED TO FIRE DOWN ON ISRAELI "ARMORED TRACTORS" AND ISRAELI POSITIONS AT THE FOOT OF THE GOLAN, THE WORLD HAS OVERLOOKED THE REASON FOR THE SYRIAN ACTION. THE ISRAELIS WERE DURING THE LATE 40'S AND 50'S STEADILY ENCROACHING INTO A MUTUALLY-AGREED UPON DEMILITARIZED AREA IN WHICH ARAB FISHERMEN AND VILLAGERS WERE STILL LIVING. THESE PEOPLE WERE EVENTUALLY DISPLACED BY THE ILLEGAL ISRAELI ENCROACHMENTS, AND IT WAS THEY WHO WOULD FIRE DOWN ON THE NEWLY ESTABLISHED SETTLEMENTS IN THE DEMILITARIZED AREA. THE SYRIANS NEVER FIRED ACROSS THE SEA OF GALILEE INTO ISRAEL PROPER. ISMAIL WENT ON THAT THE ISRAELIS ARE NOW USING THE SAME TACTICS ON THE GOLAN WHEN THEY SAID THEY NEED ALL OF THE GOLAN TO

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PROVIDE THEM WITH SUFFICIENT TERRITORY IN ORDER TO PROTECT THE NEW ILLEGAL SETTLEMENTS WHICH THEY HAVE ESTABLISHED ON LAND WHICH DOES NOT BELONG TO THEM. ISMAIL STRESSED THAT SYRIA WILL NOT GIVE UP ONE

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